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Homosexual Sues Over Loss of CIA Security Clearance

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A manager on a top-secret project at TRW Inc. who lived an open but quiet homosexual life for 30 years sued the Central Intelligence Agency on Monday in an effort to overturn the agency's policy prohibiting homosexuals from holding sensitive security clearances.

John W. Green, 50, who described himself as a conservative Republican proud of his contributions to national security, lost his special clearance in 1981, when CIA investigators coincidentally discovered that Green was a homosexual during a background check of his longtime lover, who was also a TRW employee at the time.

Green said he never concealed his homosexual relationship during the 10 years he was an engineer on classified projects at TRW's Torrance facility. He was forced to accept a lower-level job at the firm after his necessary "sensitive compartmented information" clearance, one of the highest security ratings for intelligence work, was revoked.

Gay rights leaders who oppose the CIA policy consider the case a significant court test and have offered assistance. They contend that loyal and qualified scientists and engineers who have homosexual relationships at home are not security risks, and say the policy has blocked many homosexuals from jobs, deprived the nation of good talent and risked national security because thousands of people in sensitive jobs fear admitting they are gay.

Green's clearance was revoked under a policy barring homosexuals from holding certain security clearances. The policy is based on an assumption that homosexuals are

security risks because they are susceptible to blackmail by foreign powers threatening to reveal them.

The CIA also said that Green tried to hide his sexual orientation from investigators, a charge that he denied.

The intelligence agency refused to comment on the suit Monday. TRW, a major defense and intelligence contractor, was not named in the suit. The company has a policy of not commenting on litigation.

A ban on homosexuals was adopted throughout the federal government in the early 1950s, but has been rescinded or thrown out by courts in most areas except the military and national security.

In 1981, the National Security Agency allowed a translator to keep his job if he informed his family and friends he was homosexual to avoid the chance of blackmail, but most intelligence agencies evidently continue to restrict homosexuals.

Earlier this year, a homosexual Foreign Service officer reportedly was allowed to stay on the job and accept posting overseas, despite his sexual orientation.

Became Suspicious

Century City attorney John McDermott, who is representing Green in the Los Angeles federal court suit, said the agency apparently became suspicious of Green in 1981 during a security clearance investigation of his longtime lover. Both men admitted their relationship to CIA investigators, McDermott said.

Green said during a press conference Monday that he has been open about his life style for years with co-workers and would have told investigators earlier if they had asked. But he said the agency never asked him during the background investigations it conducted before issuing his clearance.

He said he assumed that investigators knew because friends had been aware that he was gay since 1967, he belonged to a ski club for gay men and women and occasionally attended events held by a gay political club in Long Beach.

Although he lived openly, Green said, his sexual orientation never became an issue on the job. He had homosexual friends who also worked in the firm's Electronic and Defense Sector, and had given parties at his home attended by gay friends and non-gay workers from the office, he said.

"I never felt any need to corner people and express my sexual preference," Green said. "I just live my life."

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